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*Overriding Veto Ensures Seniors Access To The Doctors They Know and Trust*

( WASHINGTON, D.C.) -- Despite the strong bipartisan support of H.R. 6331, the Medicare Improvements for Patients and Providers Act, in the U.S. House of Representatives and U.S. Senate, President Bush vetoed the bill.

Today,  
Congressman Russ Carnahan (MO-03)  
and  
the New Direction Congress once again acted decisively to protect health care for seniors and those living with disabilities by delivering the

strongest rebuke of the current administration with a record veto override vote of 383-41.

The bill ensures seniors that access to the doctors they know and trust – by preventing pending Medicare payment cut for physicians. The bill eliminates the pending 10 percent cut in Medicare payments to physicians for the remainder of 2008 and provides a 1.1 percent increase in Medicare physician payments for 2009.

**“This vote gave Congress a clear choice: stand with seniors and doctors or stand with President Bush and big insurance companies,” said Congressman Carnahan.□**  
**“I**

**applaud the overwhelming number of my colleagues who once again stood in support of legislation that puts seniors first and strengthens Medicare.**

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**I encourage the Senate to do the same.”**

Next the U.S. Senate will vote to override Bush's veto. On July 9, the Senate passed the act with the assistance of Sen. Edward Kennedy of Massachusetts who made a surprise return to the Senate after undergoing brain surgery. The act passed 69-30 after the Democrats overcame a procedural hurdle.

The same legislation failed by one vote in June.

Medicare currently requires a much higher co-payment for mental health services – 50 percent – than the 20 percent required for physical health care services. The bill provides parity in coverage for mental health services by lowering co-payments over six years until they match other co-pays.

In addition, the bill extends and improves low-income assistance programs for Medicare beneficiaries whose income is below \$14,040. This includes the "Qualified Individual" program

that pays Part B premiums for low-income beneficiaries with incomes of \$12,480 to \$14,040 a year.

The bill improves access to health care in rural by: 1) improving payments for sole community hospitals, critical access hospitals, and ambulances; 2) extending expiring provisions that preserve payment equity for rural physicians and hospitals that run clinical laboratories; and 3) increasing access to tele-health services and speech-language therapy.

President Bush has consistently sided with big insurance companies having vetoed the State Children's Health Insurance Program (SCHIP) three times and vetoing the Medicare Improvements for Patients and Providers Act earlier today.

